The Basics Of Worship Leading In The Local Church

1. Heart for God
You must have a heart for God to lead in worship. Musical ability is an asset, but without a desire to love and serve God and his church, there is no worship leadership.

2. Heart for the church
You must believe in the mission of the church to reach people, to invite believers to worship and non believers to experience joy in God's presence. Worship leaders need to enjoy their church, the staff, their team members. Worship leaders need to partner with and support the pastor. A heart for the church allows each worship leader to engage fully for their season of ministry there. When you think about it, every ministry position is interim. We are there as a steward for a season. It's God's church and we must faithfully, with love and a servant's heart, help lead it.

3. Heart for the mission
You must have a heart for your particular congregation and the mission field you share together. You must love your community, the region and your people. As you begin to work on the nuts of bolts of ministry, the details need to come from a heart for the area. This allows you to go the right direction. Your connection to the people around you – here and now – will help shape how you lead worship.

4. Growing gifts and skills
You must possess gifts and skill for music and leadership. You must also be growing in these skills. Music and art skills are part of the picture – keyboard, vocals, guitar, etc. You have to have some of these skills in order to develop a team and lead. Even the best musician can grow in their level of playing and singing. Additionally, you need to be growing in your leadership skills. Are you diligent in administration, development and deployment? An example may be that you need to grow in your skill of delegating certain aspects of ministry.

5. Believe in the development of a team
You must understand that you can't do it on your own and that there are others around you waiting to be developed and engaged in ministry. You must love your people enough to involve them. What are some roles you can delegate? How can you involve others? Develop entry points for people to begin to engage in the ministry. Involve the next generation in your ministry in some way. One role of the worship leader is to develop people to lead worship – even if you're not there.

6.Faithfulness
You must stay faithful to the process to which God has called you – faithfully serving in ministry of worship through prayer, preparation, planning and serving the church. It's the job of the worship leader to help prepare the church. Set up meetings with your pastor and leaders to arrange Sunday services. Do you best to be faithful to the nature of your church while leading them to new heights.

7. Excel in practical components
You must continually be working on the practical side of ministry, the basics: flow, song selection, teaching and leading, developing, recruiting, creativity, and more. These small things will come naturally as you serve, but you also need to develop them. Attend conferences, read articles and posts, soak up all you can about the practical components to help improve the practical side of leading worship. Every week you have the opportunity to lead, evaluate it, then improve it. You will spend lots of time working both in your ministry and on your ministry.

9 Lessons for Young Worship Leaders

1. You Don't Need to Make Something Happen – Powerful worship doesn't depend on your ability to work up a room and be a charismatic leader. The Holy Spirit is moving. Jesus is glorious. All you need to do is highlight that. And get out-of-the-way.

2. Worship Leading is About Worship and Leadership – You need to be a worshiper. But that's not enough. The stage isn't the place for your own personal worship. You need to lead people and facilitate other's encounter with God.

3. Serve Your Church, Not Your Ego – You are a part of a local church. It's not a place to trumpet your own awesomeness or to do what you want. You're there to serve a lead pastor's vision and to passionately be a part of it.

4. Choose Songs That Are Good For Your People – Don't just choose songs you like or even just songs that are popular. Choose songs based on what they say and the faith they build in people. Think pastorally. What do your people need to say and sing?

5. Songs Are Tools, Not Ends in Themselves – The goal of your "worship time" isn't to sing through songs. Rather, carry something in your heart for what you're about to do. Use songs as vehicles to help you lead people into declaring the promises of God.

6. Learn How to Communicate – Singing isn't enough. Great worship leaders build trust with the people they lead. And that is done by knowing how to speak and communicate in a way that helps people relax and endears them to you.

7. Don't Think Of It As a Career Move – Thinking of worship leading as a career leads to all sorts of problems. Think of it more in terms of your calling and your passion to serve the local church. I'm not saying you shouldn't get paid for what you do. Just don't approach your local church's stage as a way to climb the corporate ministry ladder. Lead because you love God and have a heart for his people.

8. Be A Pastor – No, you don't need to have credentials. But you need to approach your role pastorally. Love people. Care for them. Lead with compassion. Then all the other things – songwriting, albums, events – actually make sense.

9. Don't Neglect God's Word – It's easy to neglect the Bible for new worship music, leadership books, and "creative inspiration." Resist the urge. The Word is never a book you graduate from. You never learn enough. You never arrive. Let it get inside your spirit and influence everything you do & say.

God is too glorious and there's too much to be done for us to waste time on our egos. Let's love and lead with all our hearts.

Worship Leading 101

By Andrew Hopkins

“One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.”
Psalm 27:4 NIV

Are you starting out in worship leading and wondering where to begin? Or maybe you’ve been leading for some time but are looking for some good foundational teaching. You’ve found the right place.

5 foundational keys to being an effective worship leader.

1. Develop the heart of worship

It goes without saying that a worship leader must be a worshipper! After all, a worship leader leads people in worshipping God.

Start at the Cross of Christ. Thank Him for saving you, for forgiving you, for setting you free. Thank Him for welcoming you into His presence. Surrender to God afresh.

Then behold Him in His majesty, His greatness, His Fatherhood, His nearness. Search the scripture for His attributes and praise Him accordingly.

Take time on your own to worship the Lord. I love what Matt Redman says, “All worship is a response to a revelation—it's only as we breathe in more of the wonders of God that we can breathe out a fuller response to Him....the key to a life of passionate and powerful worship comes from seeing God.”

Jesus said in *Matthew 6:6—“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.”*

Your public ministry generally won’t exceed your private ministry. Taking time on your own to worship the Lord will develop a well within you to pull from when you minister publicly. People will notice the difference when you’ve spent time with Jesus! (Acts 4:13)

2. Learn the basics of music

“Sing to him a new song; play skillfully, and shout for joy.”
Psalm 33:3 NIV

Play skillfully! God wants us to be skilled.

Here are some basics:

Singing on key

Learn the song you're leading (lyrics, melody, arrangement, chords, etc. Don't depend on the tracks to tell you what to do!)
Music theory 101 *(a field of study that examines the underlying principles and structures of music, essentially the "grammar" of music)*

All of this will help you to:
Lead the song more confidently
Lead the band more effectively

Have you ever been in a situation where you know what you want to tell the band to do, but didn't have the words to describe it? …and you end up speaking in weird gibberish trying to sound out the drum beat? (Lol)

This is why developing musical skills is so important!

It will bring everyone together on the same page so you can move forward in your goal: leading people to worship God!

3. Know who you're leading

Get to know your congregation! Jesus said, *"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me." (John 10:14).* As we follow Jesus' footsteps in leadership, we see His example of knowing the people He leads.

One of the most basic ways you can get to know your congregation in regards to leading them in worship is—lead songs that they know!

One thing that I've seen over and over, is that when a new worship leader gets a chance to lead, they almost always want to do brand new songs.

This isn't the best choice for a few reasons:

The church is getting to know how you lead (and adding a new song adds another speed bump to the process)

The band is getting to know how you lead (and again, adding a new song slows that process because it's more to think about)

You're new to leading (the lack of momentum in a new song can stifle your confidence and growth as a new leader)

The solution: Learn the top 10 songs your church sings.

Get them in you so you can lead them from your heart, not just your head. Let them become well-trodden paths so you can lead them like it's second nature.

Songs are meant to be pathways to the heart of God. When there are too many new songs, it's hard to walk the path.

I've always had new worship leaders do a song that the church loves. Why? So the new leader gets to ride the momentum that's already there—the church connects with them better, the band can follow them better, and their confidence soars! A great foundation to build from.

Learn your congregation's Top 10!

4. Learn leadership skills

The other important part of the title "worship leader" is leader!

It would behoove *(it is a duty or responsibility for someone to do something;)* the worship leader to get some leadership skills.

Here is a brief list of leadership aspects that will help the worship leader:

Authority

You have the delegated authority to lead the team!

Lead with confidence! Take charge!

Remember: you're also under the authority of the senior leaders

Servanthood (Jesus-style)

How can I serve the people I lead?

How can I help them encounter God?

True leaders are there to serve

Organization

The most underrated part of worship leadership

Planning, rehearsing, structure, expectations, etc.

Relationship

Learn people skills

Build relationships with your team and congregation

Have fun with your team!

5. Lead the people!

This is a little different from the last point in that—the last point is more of a macro, big-picture view of leadership, while this point is more micro, focused on the actual worship leading.

Remember, you are not up there singing through a song list or just having your own time with the Lord—you're leading people to worship God!

This can look like:

A call to worship as you start

Praying throughout the set

Asking the congregation to engage, i.e. lift your hands, shout to God, dance, clap your hands, bow before the Lord, sing! etc.

People sometimes just need permission to do what they already want to do. You as the worship leader can give it to them. Many times it's just one "bridge" statement that helps people move from passivity to passion. Don't get caught up in just singing the song—engage the people!

A brief read through the Psalms and you can see that the worship leaders called the people to engage quite frequently. Do the same!

I hope this helps you on your worship leading journey!

Who is a worship leader?

A worship leader is a man or woman who is called of God to lead in worship. If we want the power of God to flow in our worship, the leader must be a person GOD has selected. The anointing is as essential to this ministry as it is to any other ministry. Those whom God calls, He also enables. Without this enablement the worship time will be mired in imitation and fleshly effort.

Leaders who are anointed of the Lord hold their positions among men with a light grip. They have no trouble making way for others who are anointed. However, those who have been placed in a leadership position by the hand of man must hold tightly to it with their own strength.

Musical skill and understanding are essential. Music must be handled properly or it will inhibit the flow of God's Spirit. A skillful musical mind can release the powers of music to support the expression of God's people. On the other hand, unskillful handling of music can spoil the sacrifice of praise of the whole church, the Holy-Royal Priesthood.

The worship leader must be broken before the Lord and remain broken. *(a state of humility and repentance, where individuals acknowledge their imperfections and seek God's grace)*

Through Isaiah, the Lord makes it clear that He visits His presence upon those who are humble before Him.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones. (Isaiah 57:15 KJV)

Thus saith the Lord, the heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things hath mine hand made, all those things have been, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look,("This one will I esteem", NIV) even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:1, 2 KJV)

Music and music ministry can be done in a prideful manner, lifting the musician up with pride in performance and position. Worship leading is the exact opposite. Pride is incompatible with God's presence. When the performance musician succeeds, all eyes are on him and the applause of men floods his heart. When the worship musician or worship leader succeeds, he disappears for all eyes are on Jesus and all applause goes to the Lord. Because they are soulish and physical in their origin, music, thanksgiving, and even praise can be humanly generated. But the manifest presence of the Lord is a heavenly visitation given to those who have a poor and contrite spirit and who tremble at the Word of the Lord. It cannot be generated by man; it is a gift of God. Of all musicians, the worship musician must be humble. The difference between church musicians who are performance-oriented and those who are worship-oriented is obvious. Performers are proud and worshipers are humble.

A Worship Leader is someone who is…
-called of God to lead in worship,
-musically skillful and/or understanding,
-Spiritually broken before the Lord.

6 Easy Worship Leader Hand Signals
1. Verse 1
A single finger extended – the universal signpost for the first verse.

2. Verse 2
Transition to the second verse by raising two fingers.

3. Chorus
Shape your hand into a ‘C’ – a timeless signal for the chorus.

4. Bridge
Raise three fingers to signal you’re going into the bridge

5. Repeat Tagline
Show your pinky finger if you want your team to repeat the last line of a song.

6. End
Show a closed fist when you want to end a song.

Steps for Selecting Worship Songs

1. Be You! Know your Strengths and Weaknesses

Know your vocal range and limits.
If you want to venture into a new genre of music, PRACTICE HARD. Confidence is the greatest key in communicating & connecting effectively.
Follow trends but don't become a prisoner to the idea that you have to look and sound like the "Modern Day Worship Leader". (Not everyone can rock a deep V t-shirt and skinny jeans without hindering the presence of God.)

2. Know the Culture of your Church

The culture of your church isn't determined by the style of music that you sing the most. It's influenced by the people that attend and make up your local body, but shaped by the leadership of the church.
Talk to people in the hallways, in the seats, etc. Leave your green room and engage. Be a culture shaper.
Lead from a position of influence instead of leading from a "position" or title. Be relational.

4. Be Strategic with Song Keys

You might have an incredible 1st Tenor vocal range but about 99% of the people in the seats can't get passed a high C. Transpose the higher keyed songs to comfortable yet still energetic keys.
Swap out worship leaders between songs; have a female vocalist lead songs that are to high for you. (& vice-versa)
Think about and plan what songs fit together based on key transitions. Try not to be all over the alphabet by singing in multiple keys that do not compliment one another.

5. Musicianship

Just as you know your strengths, you need to know the strengths and weaknesses of your team(s). You might be able to sing a particular song real well, but please do not allow the song to be butchered. If you need to modify, SIMPLE will always be best. (Maybe just you on piano or guitar for one song; that's pretty creative)

6. Repetition

You might be tired of singing a particular song for the 6th time, but at 6 weeks your church is barely grasping the words and the meaning of the song. Don't stash the song away yet!

7. Try to Envision the Moment You're Up Front

Leading worship is not all about dropping the one liners and using the stereotypical phrases like, "Glory to God, Hallelujah", but theres a lot of vision casting one has to focus on prior to rehearsals and services.

We must never forget that every time we lead people in worship, we’re engaging in spiritual warfare. I’ve never known of an army that goes into battle without first strategically planning. Don’t let your weekly responsibilities become a mundane routine. Too many people rely on you; your decision making is critical to each worship experience.